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ABSTRACT

Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, is a metropolitan school district which, in 1969, was ordered by a Federal judge to desegregate its more than 100 schools. Desegregation began in 1970 and continues today. Having found evidence that attitudes among whites toward both busing and desegregation had changed during these years, the author set out to examine when and why these changes took place. Fifty-six persons were interviewed. The interviewees believed: (1) that community attitudes had changed; (2) that having lost their case in the Supreme Court convinced many whites that there was no longer any point in fighting desegregation; (3) that an effort three years into desegregation to involve the community in designing a pupil assignment plan strengthened the acceptability of busing and desegregation; (4) that the busing of children from upper middle income and upper income white families made busing more acceptable to other whites; and (5) that many whites changed their attitudes when they perceived that their children were not being hurt educationally or physically by going to school with blacks. (Author/GC)

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COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARD A DESEGREGATED SCHOOL SYSTEM

A Study of Charlotte, North Carolina

By
Howard Maniloff

Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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The context of governmental action--the community--was of special concern to V.O. Key, Jr., in his study, Public Opinion and American Democracy. "In their appraisal of public response to actions and proposals," wrote Key, "officials proceed by impressionistic or systematic means, although hunch, intuition, or impression are by far the more widely used." Key then went on to discuss more specifically the interaction between community wishes and governmental actions:

> Mass opinions, aspirations, and expectations change as the political system moves through time. It is in this moving situation that the power of mass opinion makes itself manifest in its interactions with democratic leadership--chiefly in its rejection of leadership factions whose outlook lags noticeably behind or strikes out markedly ahead of the moving average of opinion. Those who wish to turn the clock back, to reverse decisions already rooted in popular acceptance, gradually learn their lesson as they meet rebuff after rebuff. Those too far ahead of opinion, though they may contribute to the forces impelling alteration of the opinion context, likewise find themselves rejected. (Key, 1965)

This paper reports the preliminary findings of a study of the "moving situation" of community opinion during the desegregation process. The author does not view desegregation as a simple change, which, at the appointed time arrives and either happens or does not happen. Desegregation might be better viewed as an educational and social change. As such, it fits the change model of initiation, implementation, and incorporation described in the Rand change agent study. If we apply that three-stage model to desegregation, we might get this sequence of events:

1. Initiation. Through court order or federal

or state regulation, a school district is told it must desegregate its schools. A process of wrangling over the most effective way to do so ensues.

2. Implementation. A desegregation plan is decided on. Teachers and pupils are re-assigned, bus routes are planned, drivers are hired, and students begin riding the bus. Neighborhoods compete to have their children assigned to particular schools, to have the shortest bus rides, or to have their children bussed out of the neighborhood for the fewest years. Enrollments are monitored, and adjustments are made to prevent resegregation.

3. Incorporation. Desegregation begins shading into integration. Busing and desegregation become accepted as facts of life. People start discussing other educational issues.

The arena selected for this study was the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System in North Carolina. This is a consolidated city-county school system, serving approximately 77,000 pupils in a county of approximately 350,000 persons. Charlotte desegregated its schools on a token basis in 1957, three years before the city-county school consolidation. During the 1960s, the consolidated city-county school system steadily increased its degree of desegregation. By 1969, however, the freedom-of-choice method had been deemed not good enough for Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The local federal judge, a pillar of the community, applauded Charlotte-Mecklenburg for its previous desegregation efforts, but went on to say that in view of the evidence and of more recent Supreme Court decisions, more had to be done. (300 F. Supp. 1358; 1969) In April, 1969, McMillan ruled that by the coming school year, the Board of Education had to completely desegregate all school faculties and go a long way toward completely desegrating all schools, even if that meant busing. Desegregation must be completed by fall, 1970, ordered McMillan.

To a community which had come to believe that it had been doing very well in its desegregation efforts, McMillan's opinion and order were like an unexpected dunking in cold water. The school board chairman said that McMillan's order had "serious and revolutionary implications." While the board argued with McMillan a group of people opposed to busing, and calling themselves the Concerned Parents Association, quickly sprang up and started attracting members. The group started in the upper-middle-income and affluent parts of the community, primarily in the Southeast. New members from throughout the county quickly joined.

Despite the loud cries of protest from both the school board and the community, McMillan held firm, even calling in a consultant to design a busing plan when he concluded that the school board was not moving quickly enough. While the case was under appeal, the Concerned Parents Association(CPA) decided to field a slate of three candidates in the 1970 school board elections. Three incumbents, including a Black minister who had been appointed to fill an unexpired term,ran, but they were all defeated by the CPA candidates.

Although the case was on appeal, and although the anti-busing candidates had won election to the school board, McMillan's order was still in effect, so total desegregation of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's more than 100 schools began in the fall of 1970.

The first year of busing began with a boycott which fizzled, student violence which continued off and on for several years, and protests by parents and school board members. In the spring, the Supreme Court ruled by 9-0 that Judge McMillan had acted within his authority.

Busing continued, and so did the violence. In the fall of 1971, the school board asked the Community Relations Committee to study problems in the schools. After a series of hearings and after studying written statements by 4,000 persons in the community, the committee issued its report in March, 1972. The report found that there was a need to restore order, that many discipline problems could be traced to the educational frustration of students who had difficulty learning, that more community involvement was needed in school decisions, and that the arguing among board members was deepening the divisions within the community.

The school board paid little attention to the report, but the report, coming as it did in the midst of the 1972 school board election campaign, did have the effect of defining some of the issues in that election. Candidate after candidate, whether for or against busing, spoke of the need for "positive leadership." (Maniloff, 1973) As they moved about the county, candidates noticed that fewer people seemed concerned with busing. When the election was over, the anti-busing candidates had lost. The winners included the school board chairman, who had, despite his early opposition to busing, campaigned primarily by talking about the need for improved early childhood education. The other two winners were a busiman who supported the judge's order and a banker who became the first Black elected in a county-wide election in Mecklenburg County.

In the early years of busing, some Whites who had opposed any busing at all, grew to dislike the Charlotte-Mecklenburg pupil assignment plan in particular. They complained that the plan called for their children to be bused for more years than for the children living in affluent areas, particularly the Southeast. Some of these people formed a group called Citizens United For Fairness (CUFF) and sent their leaders time and again to the school board to plead for fairness in pupil assignment.

The call was picked up by others in the community, and, by the fall of 1973, when the school board invited interested citizens and leaders of various parent and community groups to come before it and give their views on a new desegregation plan, a new consensus seemed to have developed. The daily paper reported, "The consensus was, quite simply, that busing for desegregation is here to stay--and that future pupil assignment plans must distribute the burden fairly, have year-by-year stability, and be drawn up with heavy community involvement."

The speakers who had appeared before the school board included Blacks and Whites, pro-busing people and anti-busing people, parents from throughout the community, and some people who had started out by fighting busing and now did not want to anymore. The speakers had met several times prior to the board meeting for briefings by the school system's staff on the legalities and logistics of pupil assignment. As they met, they sensed a growing feeling of commonality among themselves, and, after they spoke their piece to the board, decided to come together as a group which would seek a stable, fair pupil assignment plan. This group, The Citizens Advisory Group (CAG), met with the staff for several months to help develop a new plan--this one with involvement by the community.

Fairness in pupil assignment continued to be a major issue as the 1974 school board election approached. One of the candidates was Sam McNinch, a popular incumbent who had fiercely resisted busing. McNinch lost.

A year later, when the school superintendent decided to transfer several Black principals from their formerly Black schools, he was met with a storm of protest mounted by white parents. Edward Sanders, an associate superintendent then and the head of pupil assignment during the early years of busing, recalled that episode in an interview:

> When I worked down in pupil assignment that first year, people would come in my office, and they'd be lined up out there and they'd be just raising hell a-

bout,"I'm not sending my child to a damn nigger school." They fussed about everything--the smell of the john, the whole ball of wax. Then, when they decided to move principals around, well here was a group of ladies in their white gloves, and every one of them was lily white, came up there and were raising hell, because the superintendent was trying to do something to "our school." And I asked them to repeat themselves a couple times, because I wanted to hear what they said, and they said they don't want anybody fooling with "our school" Well, in '70 and '71, that wasn't "our school." That was "that damn nigger school."

In the 1976 school board election, the candidate who finished with the most votes was the incumbent Black board member. He was soon elected chairman of the school board by the other board members.

That year also marked the reversal of a trend toward private school enrollment, which had begun in 1969. After an initial spurt, the rise in private school enrollment started declining. In 1976, both the percentaage and absolute number of school-age children in Mecklenburg County declined.

In considering what happened in Charlotte-Mecklenburg in the years following the implementation of total desegregation, one might keep in mind social psychological literature on attitude formation. In particular, these concepts are relevant:

*Festinger's work on factors leading one to maintain or discard opinions in the face of disconfirming evidence (Festinger, 1956)

*The theory of cognitive dissonance, as first outlined by Festinger (Festinger, 1957),

*Milgram's work on obedience to authority (Milgram, 1974), and

*The concept of relative deprivation (Merton, 1968).

Careful study of the election returns in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and of the events related to school desegregation which occurred from 1969 through 1976 indicate a clear shift in attitude toward busing and desegregation. The purpose of this study was to explore when and how that shift occurred.

METHODOLOGY

This study included analyses of election returns, newspaper and magazine articles describing the events in Charlotte before, during, and after the implementation of total desegregation, and of several reports, published and unpublished, on Charlotte's desegregation. The answers to the questions of why and how attitudes shifted in Charlotte were sought in interviews. Individuals who, through the positions they held or the activities they engaged in, could be expected to have some insight into community attitudes toward desegregation were interviewed. In addition, these interviewees were asked to recommend others who might have similar insight. Table I describes the 56 interviewees:

TABLE 1

Race and Background
Of Interviewees

Category	Number Black	Number White	Total
School Board Members	2	12	14
School District Administrators	5	10	15
Principals	5	1	6
Representatives of Other Governmental Agencies or Interest Groups	1	11	12
Editors	0	3	3
Miscellaneous	2	4	6
Total	15	41	56

Some interviewees fell into more than one category. Four clergymen, for example, were interviewed. One fell into the "miscellaneous category," one in the "school board" category, and one in the "governmental agencies" category.

The bulk of the interview consisted of 25 questions regarding the desegregation of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, from the time of the first court order in 1969 up until the time of the interview. Any retrospective study relying on memory carries built-in dangers. As George F. Kennan once wrote:

> The fact is that one moves through life like someone moving with a lantern in a dark woods. A bit of the path ahead is illuminated, and a bit of the path behind. But the darkness follows hard on one's footsteps, and envelopes our trail as one proceeds. (Kennan, 1967)

Memory about a controversy is even more dangerous. To ascertain the viewpoints of respondents, the interview included three questions on the role of government relative to school desegregation. Respondents who answered two out of three of these questions in a manner reflecting a disinclination to support government action needed to implement or maintain busing for desegregation were grouped and called "Hesitants." It would not be appropriate to deem all those in this group opponents of busing for desegregation.Some of them opposed busing in the beginning and still do, some opposed it in the beginning and support it now, others say they will make the best of it. Twelve of the respondents were in this category.

All other respondents were designated "Accepters." The Accepters include some who support busing fervently and some who do so grudgingly. All Black respondents fell into this category. Accepters were designated as either "White Accepters" or "Black Accepters" to facilitate comparison of Black and White responses.

Table 2 describes the categories of respondents.

TABLE 2

Respondents By Race and Category

	Hesitants	Accepters	Total
Black	0 (0%)	15 (26.8%)	15 (26.8%)
White	12 (21.4%)	29 (51.8%)	41 (73.2%)
Total	12 (21.4%)	44 (78.6%)	56 (100%)

RESULTS

In this section, summaries of the answers given to seven key questions in the interview will be provided. The question will be stated, and a discussion of the answers will follow.

Question: How did the community react when Judge McMillan issued his initial busing order in 1969?

Almost without exception, respondents recalled reactions of anger and astonishment. These are some representative answers: (Note: for this and for the following question, the respondent will be identified by category and by assigned identification number)

> People were desirous of open rebellion. I don't think the terms to express it can be over-emphasized. There was disbelief, furor. (Hesitant 03)

> The impact was one of astonishment more than anything else. Everything that had happened in the desegregation movement had been something you could avoid. Not many people had been hit with a situation you could not escape from. (White Accepter 04)

> The community was angry, because they felt Charlotte had done enough. (White Accepter 09)

> They were extremely frustrated, emotional, hostile. They did not want social change. They tried to find all types of excuses to get around complying with the order. A lot of Whites felt that if their children went to a formerly Black school, they would get an inferior education. (Black Accepter 74)

> They were belligerent as hell. (Black Accepter 77)

> The community went into shock. It was really a panic situation. People were rising up in terrible indignation, fear, and anxiety about what would happen. (White Accepter 33)

In answering this question, white respondents uniformly discussed only white reaction. Blacks dealt with both

White and Black reactions. Here are two representative answers:

> Black people said, "This is what we ought to have had a long time ago. This is what we needed." White people said, "Oh, my goodness! Is this going to work? Are we going to let it work?" (Black Accepter 73)

> There were big smiles. (Black Accepter 79)

One Black educator recalled speaking to a white PTA group shortly after the order was handed down:

> I was scared to death. They were tense. . . There was a fear of the unknown, resistance to breaking up the Southern Way of Life. They had preconceived stereotypes, and they reacted out of fear of them. (Black Accepter 75)

Question: In the wake of Judge McMillan's order, a group of parents strongly opposed to busing formed the Concerned Parents Association, the CPA. How did the community react when the CPA's three candidates won election to the Board of Education in 1970?

Among white respondents, 73% recalled that the community believed that as a result of the election, busing would be stopped, curtailed, or delayed. One reason for this belief was said to be the conviction that the the CPA candidates would see to it once they took office that the desegregation case would be appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, and that that court would never uphold Judge McMillan's decision. The percentage of those believing that the election foretold the end of busing was virtually the same among Hesitants and White Accepters. These are some representative answers:

> People said, "We're powerful enough so that we can get something changed." (Hesitant 08)

> The reaction was, "We've won, and we'll put the niggers back where they belong." (White Accepter 19)

> Most of the whites had falsely been led to believe that by electing CPA candidates they'll do something about it. (White Accepter 20)

> They were elected in the belief they could pull it off against all the pressures of McMillan. We thought we had the answer. (Hesitant 34)

It was traumatic. I thought that was the worst damn thing that ever happened in this school system. We thought, "What the hell has happened to us?" I just couldn't believe what had happened. (Black Accepter 76)

There was a hush in the Black community. (Black Accepter 77)

A lot of Blacks thought the Lord had died that day. We knew that racism was reigning supreme in this community which thought it wasn't racist. (Black Accepter 79)

Question: Some people said that education would suffer if Black children and White children were put together. What did they mean by that?

Approximately 75% of the respondents said that this opinion was widespread in the community in 1969, 1970, and 1971. The respondents were nearly unanimous in explaining the opinion by saying it meant that people believed Black children were not as bright as White children and would therefore pull down the academic achievement of Whites. White and Black Accepters were also nearly unanimous in saying that they do not hear this kind of opinion voiced anymore. Hesitants were about evenly divided on this point. These are some representative answers:

It was a universal opinion that the quality of education was going to be lowered by mixing Blacks and Whites. The problem was a fear of Blacks' social values: language, sex, violence. People had a question as to whether Blacks' basic intellect was lower. They were concerned about the cleanliness of Blacks, about their sex mores. The cultural difference frightened them. There was a definite fear of mixing of the races--of intermarriage. (White Accepter 18)

They were talking out of their fears and stereotypes: Blacks aren't very smart. Therefore, the level of instruction will have to be lowered. Blacks don't know how to behave. Therefore, discipline problems will increase. It has not completely disappeared. You see it manifested in the push for Talent Development programs and optional schools. (Black Accepter 75)

This was an opinion held by Whites all over. They felt that Blacks couldn't think. They had been programmed to this. I don't hear it today. (Black Accepter 76)

Lots of people felt that Blacks were going to contaminate their children with all kinds of drugs and diseases and alcohol and profane language. They also meant that Blacks were inferior, not capable of learning. People don't say that today. (White Accepter 19)

Everybody said that. This is prejudice coming out in people. People say, "My child is above average, and that nigger over there is below and will pull him down." (Hesitant 34)

Question: In April, 1971, The Supreme Court upheld Judge McMillan's order by a 9-0 vote. What did people say when they got the news?

Notwithstanding the answers to the first two questions, only 15% of the respondents recalled the community reacting with shock or disbelief at the Supreme Court decision. These are the percentages in each category who recalled reactions of disbelief: White Accepters, 23.1%; Black Accepters, 0.0%; and Hesitants, 16.7%. More respondents (30.0%)recalled that the Whites were disappointed in the decision. Blacks recalled jubilation among Blacks. Some of the Hesitants recalled people feeling that the decision had been a "put-up job." These are some representative responses:

They said it had to be a put-up job. If it had come out 6-3, or anything other than 9-0, they would have had a chance, but when it came out 9-0, they felt, "Hellfire, we never had a chance from the beginning." (Hesitant 03)

The general feeling was that McMillan had been told what to do in advance by the Supreme Court. He tried to keep his trips to Washington quiet. (Hesitant 38)

By then they had lived with busing for seven months, and it had not been the terrible thing they had imagined. I don't think the community was shocked. (White Accepter 09)

That's when the turning point started. Even Bill Poe (the school board chairman) said, "That's the law, and I will obey the law." That's the attitude many took. (White Accepter 13)

They said they didn't get a fair hearing. They felt betrayed. It was at that point that they began to see that they couldn't do anything about the ruling, and the election of the CPA candidates didn't do anything to accomplish anything. At that point, people were really bitter. (White Accepter 17)

I don't think the people were that shocked. We were hoping against hope. (White Accepter 21)

They were generally quite shocked. Within a week or month, though, some voices began to be heard, saying, "Okay, we've had our day in court. Now let's see what we can do to live with the situation and begin to make the best of it." (White Accepter 20)

They said they knew God wasn't dead. In His own time, He'll do justice. I think now we said that to rationalize not having justice. But it was the only thing keeping us sane. (Black Accepter 79)

Whites said, "God damn Judge McMillan. Blacks said, God bless 'im." (Black Accepter 71)

Question: During those early years of busing, some people started talking about a busing plan which would be both fair and stable. When people said they wanted a plan that was "fair," what did they mean?

Responses to this question varied more on racial lines than according to whether one was an Accepter or a Hesitant. Among Black respondents, 66.7% said that in using the term fairness, people were referring to the inequities between Blacks and Whites in the busing plan then in use. Among all White respondents, only 17.9% said that ameliorating Black-White pupil assignment inequities was what fairness was all about. Most White respondents said that fairness was a term used to refer to the need to correct inequities among Whites. In the early 1970s, there was a widespread belief that affluent whites were favored by the busing plan, in that their children were bused for fewer years than the children of other whites. Among White respondents, 71.8% recalled that it was this issue which was the crux of fairness. Only 33.3% of the Black respondents agreed. Table 3, on the following page, summarizes these figures.

These are some representative answers to this question:

They meant one (busing plan) that would affect people throughout the community equally. The earlier plan did not involve the richer areas. (Black Accepter 72)

Blacks and some White meant that the plan should not put any more of a burden on the Black youngster than it did on the White. (Black Accepter 75)

TABLE 3

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Definition of Fairness*

	Fairness As Correcting Inequities Among Whites	Fairness As Correcting Inequities Between Blacks and Whites
Hesitants	75.0%	16.7%
White Accepters	70.4%	18.5%
White Total	71.8%	17.9%
Black Accepters	33.3%	66.7%
All Respondents*	61.1%	31.5%

They meant that the Southeast wouldn't be excluded (from busing). One of the things that busing brought out was that some parts of the community always get the short end of the stick. This intensified their feelings of helplessness. (White Accepter 02)

Everybody would get bused for a period of time. Those being bused more frequently felt that it was unfair. Those not being bused frequently felt it was fair. (White Accepter 07)

That's when the desegregation problem and the old attitudes began to become unraveled. People who were the outs began to see themselves as well as the Blacks as the outs, and they began to sympathize with them. They began to say, "Let's have the Whites of Southeast Charlotte do as much as we do." When that happened, we broke the barrier to desegregating the schools. The barrier had been Black-White, and the Black would always lose. (White Accepter 09)

What they meant was, spread the misery. (Hesitant 03)

If I'm going to get dumped on, you're going to get dumped on. (Hesitant 34)

Black respondents were evenly divided on whether people feel the current busing plan is fair. Among whites, 61.5% of the respondents (66.7% of the White Accepters and 50.0% of the Hesitants) reported that the community feels the current plan to be a fair one.

Question: Sam McNinch was a popular school board member who had opposed busing from the start. When he ran for re-election in 1974, he lost. How did people react to his defeat?

Only three respondents (two White Accepters and one Hesitant) recalled any great surprise when McNinch was defeated. Blacks recalled feelings of jubilation, Whites of disappointment, relief, and joy. Running through the responses was a theme of change. White Accepters described the change as one of tiredness with fighting or of determination to move on. Hesitants described it as a shift to apathy and discouragement. These are some representative responses:

> Most people felt his defeat marked the end of the strong CPA movement. It was a symbol of a changed attitude--not of a liking of busing, but of the recognition that busing is a reality. (White Accepter 10)

> There wasn't much reaction. After the Supreme Court decision and some time had passed, we had moved away from the one-issue emotionalism kind of thing. It was evident that no one would change things. We lost many of the rednecks. They moved to outlying counties and private schools. (White Accepter 13)

> The group of people happy with McNinch's defeat was much larger than the group happy about McMillan's first order. (White Accepter 16)

> Some in our church and neighborhood who had opposed busing in 1969 were pleased that some responsible, moderate people had gotten in. The issue changed to how do we make this thing go? (White Accepter 25)

> His votes stayed home. It was the most outward sign of how the community felt about the Supreme Court decision. Total discouragement. People had given it their all, and it hadn't worked. So they stayed home. (Hesitant 05)

> By then, everybody had acquiesced. Everybody's senses were dulled. They just didn't care. (Hesitant 08)

> In the Black community, with glee, and I believe in a large segment of the White community too. His defeat indicated the end of an era. People were no longer pre-occupied with the issues Sam was espousing. (Black Accepter 75)

> The people danced in the streets. The witch is dead, the witch is dead. (Black Accepter 76)

Question: Do people in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County look at busing any differently today than they did in 1970 and 1971? Explain.

All Accepters, Black and White, reported that the community has changed its attitude toward busing. Among Hesitants, 75% reported changed community attitudes. Among all 56 respondents, only three (all Hesitants) said the community has not changed its attitude toward busing. Most respondents described the change as one from opposition to acceptance. In discussing why people had changed their attitude, many respondents said that Whites had found that "their worst fears were not realized." Some respondents said that busing and desegregation have provided better educational opportunities than had previously been available.

These are some representative responses:

> Their fears didn't materialize. Their kids weren't killed, their girls weren't raped, and their kids continued to learn. (White Accepter 02)

> The fear of the unknown is greater than what is known. They don't fear it. Some don't like it, but they don't fear it. The fear was lost when they realized Johnny was scrambling out to the bus to see his friends. (White Accepter 07)

> They've accepted it now. I come in contact with many parents who would never have dreamed their kids would have gone to West Charlotte (a formerly Black high school in a Black neighborhood). A lot would vote to desegregate today that never would have in 1970. (White Accepter 14)

> They no longer look at it as Black schools and White schools. They no longer look at a school as poor because of its location. People are looking more at what their kids are learning than at where they're learning. (White Accepter 19)

> They have resigned themselves to the fact that it's a fact of life and is going to continue to be. They have less fear now, because we have a track record, and a lot of fears they had in 1970, they've seen are not justified. They don't see it as an instrument of destruction any longer. A large number are willing to say now that integration should be, and this is the only way to do it. (White Accepter 26)

> There is an honest concern about the cost. It is seen as a part of normal operations. There is a feeling of there is nothing we can do about it. There is resignation. They don't even think of it. It's an accepted fact. (Hesitant 00)

People who opposed it feel just as surely now that it's a waste. They're not as upset on a day-to-day basis. They've acquiesced, not accepted. Unless you have someone stirring them up, people grow tired of being upset. (Hesitant 05)

A whole lot of people say, "It's there, and what can you do about it?" They just accept it, because it's the law of the land. (Hesitant 29)

A great deal of the emotional freight that it carried in the early days has been eliminated. There's a general acceptance, a realization that the calamities that had been projected did not take place. (Hesitant 30)

Blacks generally responded to this question by describing a new atmosphere of acceptance. Several Blacks who are or who have been principals described "conversions" of White parents who unexpectedly found that their children were not only learning, but also happy in formerly Black schools. The last of these three responses is one of several on this theme:

A majority look at busing differently. In 1971, it was a change. It was something being forced down their throats. They didn't have input into the way it was carried out. Since then, they have had some input, and the plan has been sanctioned by the Supreme Court. It's more something that's accepted. Law does play a role in helping people change their ideas and attitudes. Most people would oppose going back to where they were 10 years ago, but would favor some change on practical things--like convenience. (Black Accepter 72)

I think a lot of Whites are proud to say their kids go to school with Black kids now. I don't think there's a deep down hatred, as there was in 1970. (Black Accepter 79)

One lady picketed Judge McMillan's home. Her child came here from Lansdowne (a school in a suburban, white neighborhood) and was tense and nervous. Second semester the mother came in and said, "I see a different child." She had relaxed, she wasn't tense. Her mother said this school wasn't as pressurized. (Black Accepter 74)

Respondents were also asked when, for the first time, more people in the community accepted than did not accept busing. Answers ranged from the 1971 Supreme Court decision to the 1975-76 school year. Some respondents cited a particular time. Others said the change occurred gradually.

These are some representative responses:

I think the people of the community were ready to quit a long time before their elected or appointed leaders were ready to. (White Accepter 22)

The time of the Supreme Court decision. I had the feeling that this was the beginning of the community's turning around. When they internalized that they had gone the limit, they felt, "We've got to do it." By that fall, you began feeling the difference. (White Accepter 25)

The 1973-74 school year. The people had finally gotten in their minds that it's here to stay, and we might as well get on with the business of education. Our school had more support that year. (Black Accepter 74)

The 1972 election was a public recognition that we were headed in the direction of acceptance. (White Accepter 28)

The CAG year (late 1973 through 1974). The development of the Citizens Advisory Group was itself an indication that the community was fed up with the Board's failure to do its job and develop a plan. Acceptance of the plan was the turning point. (Black Accepter 75)

Nineteen seventy-five was the first year I felt like things were working better, and the community was beginning to accept. (Hesitant 15)

In the last two or three years. People are beginning to go back to the PTAs and the Booster Clubs. (Hesitant 29)

After the Supreme Court decision. (Hesitant 34)

DISCUSSION

Although the implementation of total desegregation came suddenly in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, it seems clear that in a larger sense there was a lengthy process at work, a process similar to the change process described in the Rand change agent study. (Berman and McLaughlin, 1975) Initiation occurred in 1969, with the federal district court order. Implementation followed in 1970. Incorporation continues today.

From this study, it seems that several factors are related to the incorporation process:

1. With the Supreme Court decision, those who did not want busing came to believe that they could not win their fight, that there was no way out.

2. The existence and work of the Citizens Advisory Group provided the appearance and reality of everyday people having a say in the pupil assignment plan that would affect them.

3. A class issue was resolved. Among Whites, the question of fairness was essentially a class issue. The pupil assignment plan adopted in 1974 provided for more busing of youngsters from the affluent parts of town.

4. Amid a professional staff filled with apprehension and uncertainty, there were many teachers and principals whose work convinced skeptical White parents that their children were safe and would learn. As the respondents said, parents' worst fears were not realized.

From this study, we can see a number of questions needing further study:

1. How important is unswerving legal authority in desegregation? What factors lead individuals to accept or reject that authority?

2. To what extent does the concept of relative deprivation explain resistance to desegregation and busing. Although Blacks were bused far more than Whites, middle income Whites still felt deprived relative to the small degree of busing facing the children of the affluent.

3. How does what happens to a child after he gets off the bus affect his parents' attitude toward busing? There seems to be ample evidence in Charlotte-Mecklenburg that in many cases satisfaction with their children's experiences in school influenced parents to change the way they looked at busing.

4. Is the Rand three-stage model of educational change generally applicable to desegregation?

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